2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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maintaining, amity and solidarity in the clan, and no less efficacious in promoting their increase and prosperity than the ancestral cult of Mosuor biis. Such mystical interpretations are, in fact, a reflex of the social structure. They throw no light on the problem of the numbers of Mosuor's posterity. Without historical documents we must accept it as one of the given facts of Tale society.

Here a point of particular interest may be noted. Though they are held, in common with other Namoo clans in Taleland, to be an intrusive group by origin, the clan of Mosuor biis forms the backbone of Tale political organization. They place their founding ancestor some eight to ten generations back counting from the heads of existing minimal lineages. But the clans which claim to be autochthonous and to have antedated all the Namoos of Taleland in their occupation of the country give pedigrees of about the same chronological extension. It is obvious therefore that no means of estimating the relative lengths of time during which Namoos and non-Namoos have been settled in Taleland are provided by their genealogies. Like their myths of origin, the chronological retrospect implied in Tale clan or lineage genealogies has no historical value. The chronological depth of their genealogies and the fact that they preserve the graves of significant ancestors seem to justify the inference that the Tale Namoos have occupied their present settlements for not less than two and possibly for three centuries. The Tallensi, however, do not evaluate their genealogies in this way. Genealogies are significant to them as one of the principal instruments for organizing their present social relations. They are kept alive only in so far as they serve this end, and have no value, therefore, as a measure of the time during which a clan or lineage has been in existence. The uniform genealogical retrospect of Namoo and non-Namoo clans in Taleland is a reflex of the stability and coherence of their social and political relations. The only historical inference one can justifiably make is that their present social order has been in existence for a greater length of time than the memories of the oldest living natives can compass. This is the essence of the statement 'It has been thus since the days of our fathers and forefathers', which the natives regard as a sufficient explanation of the origin of most of their institutions.